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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6633
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1352
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 0876
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1378
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0940
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1869
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002860

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TAGS: PREL EAID PGOV PHUM PINS ID

SUBJECT: ACEH -- ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY ON SECURITY, HUMAN
RIGHTS

REF: JAKARTA 821

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Medan.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: Poloff held a dialogue on human rights with activists in a former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) stronghold in Aceh, October 3. Poloff emphasized the USG's full support for Aceh's peaceful development under terms of the Helsinki GOI-GAM MoU. The main priorities conveyed to poloff during the informal dialogue were: the problem of deteriorating law and order; and the need to establish a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) to address human rights abuses committed during the conflict. Overall, Aceh interlocutors seemed committed to the MoU, but uncertain about the evolving situation. END SUMMARY.

CONCERN ABOUT CRIME

¶3. (SBU) On October 3, poloff and Medan pol FSN held an informal dialogue at a local NGO office on human rights issues in post-conflict Aceh with a group of 45 members of civil society, including 10 from the prominent NGO Aceh Referendum Information Center (SIRA), 25 ex-combatants, several students and two former political prisoners. Located on the northern Aceh coast, Bireuen district was a GAM stronghold during the conflict. (Note: The GOI and GAM signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Helsinki in August 2005, ending the decades-long conflict.)

¶4. (C) Poloff began the meeting by emphasizing the USG's full support for Aceh's peaceful development under terms of the Helsinki MoU and for its post-tsunami reconstruction. Former SIRA leader Fuady Sony stated that rising criminality is a threat to the peace process. Sony emphasized that the large number of unsolved crimes was a key part of the pervasive insecurity felt in the region. Sony alleged that Indonesian government groups may be responsible for many of these unsolved crimes, widely reported by local media to be perpetrated by "unknown actors." Feelings of insecurity in the region also show up in public opinion surveys. The rise in concern is substantiated by numerous reliable contacts in Aceh who report that shootings and intimidation by "unknown actors" and mounting numbers of unsolved violent crimes have

sparked real feelings of insecurity among the general population.

MISTRUST REMAINS HIGH

¶5. (C) In a separate meeting, John Virgoe, Southeast Asia Director of International Crisis Group (ICG), commented on the security situation in Aceh. He told poloff that Aceh is developing into a "mafia-like state," in which law and order are increasingly breaking down. Former GAM who make up the Aceh Transition Committee (KPA) act as non-legal arbiters of criminal cases, community affairs and business disputes throughout Aceh, he claimed. Meanwhile, low-level former fighters have yet to see the fruits of reintegration programs, Virgoe said. Mistrust between the Indonesian government apparatus and elements of the community remains high, he added.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION?

¶6. (C) SIRA leaders at the dialogue demanded that a TRC be established to address human rights violations committed by all sides during the conflict in Aceh. The Helsinki MoU and the Law on Governing Aceh (LOGA) both call for the establishment of a TRC for Aceh. Pressure to establish a TRC is increasing from coalitions of Aceh and Jakarta-based NGOs and within the Aceh government. The MoU states that an Aceh TRC should be established by the national TRC. In December 2006, the Constitutional Court revoked the law on the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (reftel A) leading some observers to question whether the Aceh TRC could still be established. Civil society advocates, however, suggest that other legal bases for the establishment of an Aceh TRC remain.

¶7. (U) Urban NGOs and civil society participants at the

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dialogue in Bireuen cited two other priorities for human rights in Aceh:

-- The establishment of a human rights court in Aceh, per MoU article 2.2 on human rights.

-- (Despite disputes as to whether current GAM-linked prisoners are "political prisoners") Activists want the release of remaining political prisoners, per MoU article 3.1.2 on "amnesty and reintegration into society."

PLEASED WITH PEACE

¶8. (C) Overall, Aceh interlocutors seemed pleased with peace and committed to the MoU. Everyone supported the peace process, stressing that the current situation was dramatically better than the years of war. However, they expressed considerable uncertainty about the future. Rising crime and inter-linked concerns about the general security situation top the list of worries.

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